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Diyala provincial leaders call for peace in wake of mosque attack

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BAQUBAH, Iraq (Feb. 25, 2006) -- Six influential members of Diyala Provincial government held a press conference at the Governor's Center in Baqubah on Friday to denounce the recent bombing of the Askaryia Shrine by terrorist cells in the Samarra Province and demanded peace and calm in the eastern Iraqi province of Diyala.

Deputy Governor Auwf Rahoumi Hamed called the press conference with Vice Diyala Council Chief, Sheik Thari Thaaban Ssalm; Gen. Saman al-Talibani, commander of the 2nd Brigade, 5th Iraqi Army Division; Diyala Deputy Police Chief, Najeb Juwad Amed; Sheik Shihab al-Badri, a prominent Sunni Imam; and Sheik Talib al-Outbi, a prominent Shiite Imam.

"The terror attack aimed at the Askaryia Shrine and the Golden Dome in Samarra is not an easy subject because it is an important symbol to the Islamic religion. This building is a guide for Iraqi culture with its pristine architecture and its art. The people are proud of this edifice, and the terrorists want to rent Iraqi unity from its constituents," said Ssalm.

Local police and the Iraqi Army received orders from Baghdad to enforce a curfew to help avoid violence resulting from Wednesday's attack.

Governor Ra'ad Rashid al-Timimi is away on trade negotiations leaving the deputy governor to address the people during this troubled time.

"We call upon the honorable to stand together to keep and save our country, and we call upon the sheiks and leaders of the people to cooperate with security forces and direct the citizens to follow the rule of law, to abide by the curfew, and to spread the brotherhood between our people," said Hamed.

Coalition Forces in Diyala fall under the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division though the command only observed this entirely Iraqi lead event.

“The Diyala government is committed to a free and stable democratic Iraq. This gathering of leaders from the government and Iraqi Security Forces led by Deputy Governor Auwf Rahoumi Hamed, calling for peace and calm in the wake of the mosque attack is yet another example of the Iraqi government’s commitment to peace,” said Lt. Col. Chris Johnson, executive officer of 3rd Brigade.

Each of the provincial officials took turns speaking about the attacks, first calling for prayer to the prophet and his family, then expressing an emotional call to peace in the wake of the attacks.

Iraqi Army commander, Gen. Talibani took a firmer approach. He demanded that the citizens abide by the rule of law and not give quarter to terrorists, and he issued a stern warning to the terrorists masquerading as holy fighters referring to them as al-Qaeda and al-Takfiri, the non-believers.

“Diyala will not be a safe place for terrorists and if they call themselves Mujahadeen, then they must wave a flag of principles, but they have no principles, only to kill civilians. But we are al-Mujahadeen against the terrorists and we will fight them until the final blood point,” Talibani said.

The dome of the Golden Mosque was completely blown off the base of the mosque by terrorists on Wednesday. The Golden Mosque is believed to contain the remains of Imam Ali al-Hadi, who died in 868 A.D. and his son Imam Hassan al-Askari, who died in 874 A.D. Both are considered descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.

There was a slight rise in violence in the region of Diyala after the bombing, but Iraqi Security Forces have largely controlled the violence through enforcement of the curfew. “Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police have demonstrated their increasing ability to provide security and stability in the region,” Johnson said.

Full video transcript and English translation available on the Digital Video and Imagery Distribution System website, www.dvidshub.net.



Influential members of Diyala Province speak out against the recent Golden Mosque bombings and plead with the local residents to remain calm and comply with imposed curfew. From left to right, Sheik Shihab al-Badri, Sheik Talib al-Otbi, Sheik Thari Thaaban Ssalm, Deputy Governor Auwf Rahoumi Hamed, Deputy Police Chief Najeb Juwad Amed, Gen. Saman al-Talibani. Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office



Provincial leaders share a light hearted moment at the conclusion of the press conference. Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office.



From left to right Al-Wakof Al-Shiite representative, Sheik Talib al-Otbi; Al-Wakof Al-Sunni representative, Sheik Shihab al-Badri; Vice Diyala Council Chief, Sheik Thari Thaaban Ssalm. Photo by Pfc. Paul J. Harris 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office.

English Translation

Diyala Press Conference

25 February, 2006

Provincial response to violence in wake of Golden Mosque Bombing

Deputy Governor Auwf Rahoumi Hamed:

We understand the late media and that some journalist cannot attend because of the curfew and some will be covering the incident in Buhriz. We excuse those journalist that their questions may be asked by another.

By the name of God we pray for Mohammed and his family and his fellows and peace for all.

We denounce the cowardly criminal act against the Askaryia Shrine in Samarra Province. We condemn this act which is aimed at the Iraqi people and Islamic holy sites. We call on the Iraqi people to not give in to the terrorists, Takfirian, and other directed groups whose aim is to break Iraqi will.

Diyala officials and security forces are here to keep the peace and a curfew has been enacted in the interest of safety and security of the people. We call on the honorable citizens to be calm and

patient and understand the current situation in Iraq. We confirm our nationalism and unity and denounce any act that attempts to rent our country's unity. We call upon the honorables to stand together to keep and save our country. And we call upon the sheiks and leaders of the people to cooperate with security forces and direct the citizens to follow the rule of law, to abide by the curfew, and to spread the brotherhood between our people.

We call this meeting with army and police commanders, the vice Diyala council chief, the Al-Wakof al-Sunni, and Al-Wakof al-shiite to quickly call out to the people of Diyala and demand cooperation with army and police forces.

Vice Diyala Council Chief, Sheik Thari Thaaban Ssalm:

By the name of God and pray for Mohammed, his family, and his fellows.

The terror attack aimed at the Askaryia Shrine and the Golden Dome in Samarra is not an easy subject because it is an important symbol to the Islamic religion. This building is a guide for Iraqi culture with its pristine architecture and its art. The people are proud of this edifice, and the terrorists want to rent Iraqi unity from its constituents.

This is a huge calamity that will distinguish an era just like the World Trade Center bombing in the USA. The demonstrations against that terror attack are not unlike the demonstrations against the terror attack against the Askaryia Shrine in Iraq. The terror attack in the USA broke US security; the terror attack here destroyed an old and revered edifice that showed the lighted way to our good Imams which advance themselves for the good of the nation, and the world.

People from around the world came in pilgrimage to this dome for the blessing of religion that does not distinguish between black, white, red, and yellow. It is the right way for our nation. Following that incident, some people felt obligated to exact themselves against the orders of religious leaders such as Ali al-Sistani to remain calm and not give service to the Al-Saddamian and Al-Takfirian that assailed on the shrine.

We have great remorse about the incident and we call upon all Diyala and Iraq to remain calm and follow the orders issued by the religious authorities. Do not give service to the terrorists or their followers, the financiers and executors who sell themselves and their honor to people those who want to destroy this country.

My dear brothers, issued orders from Baghdad asks that you inform on those who try to rent the Iraqi people and abide by the curfew enacted for the security of this country and keep under the table those that want to destroy this country. We call on the obligation of the army and police forces to detain anybody not abiding by this order. It is our most sincere hope, that the Iraqi people will remain calm.

Diyala province is a respectable province that includes a wide constituency of all Iraqi people, for which it is considered a small Iraq. We are all brothers in this province which has a great history. We must look to the future and how later generations will see Iraq after its liberation from Saddam's reign, which has led us to this point.

I call upon the people to inform on anyone who tries to hinder this progress. I thank Diyala and the Iraqi People.

Gen Saman al-Talibani:

By the name of God and pray for Mohammed, his family, and his fellows.

Mine and all of Iraq's emotions are against the terrorist criminal attack on the Imam's Holy Askaryia Shrine in Samarra and we denounce this terror act and the acts against the Mosques, people, and religious men.

The terror attack in Samarra was conducted by terrorists in disguise as Iraqi Army. They entered in the Mosque, killed the guards, carried in explosives and destroyed the shrine. After the bombing, commandos from the Internal Ministry forces arrested seven suspected terrorists. The investigation by the Iraqi government accuses al-Qaiada of this cowardly attack which they are using to implant sectarian violence between the one Iraqi people.

After the incident against the Mosque and the religious men, our leaders and wise religious men controlled the situation in all the provinces. Diyala was free from Mosque attacks or attacks against religious men.

Terrorists will aim at anyone, children, men, women, religious leaders, Mosques, civilians, military, and police. These acts of terror only create fear, but we will face that fear and be victorious, Iraqi sons and Iraqi protectors. The terrorist will be defeated.

Terrorists will continue with their criminal acts but we are facing them and we call on the Iraqi people to abide by the orders and curfew issued by the central government and help us execute the order issued from higher and not break the curfew which is ongoing now.

We demand from all sects and constituents in Diyala to have patience and follow God and the Qurra'an orders and not give space to terrorists and Al-Takfiri. Do not receive them or give them help. Inform Iraqi forces of the terrorists and by this way we can defeat the terrorists that hope to destroy Diyala.

Diyala has a council, command, police, and army, and we demand the people of Diyala go about their lives naturally without fear of IEDs.

For the army, we have complete a number of successful operations during this time. We arrested a number of terrorists suspects and killed those that faced us.

During the last week, 2nd Brigade, Asad al-Sahra'a (Desert Lion), 5 Iraqi Army Division conducted a number of operations arresting 35 terrorists. Yesterday the number of terror attacks increased, so we sent 132 security patrols in al-Udaim, al-Kahlis, al-Muqdadiya, Center Cety, Khan bahne saad, Kan'an, and Baqubah districts. We made six raids against the terrorists

arresting 31, 23 responsible for terror attacks. We released two hostages from captors South of Buhriz, and during this week we disarmed 12 IEDs and a carbomb that was prepared to explode.

In Al-Nahrawan, the people hold the army and police responsible for that incident. There existed in that area no protective force. It was a gap in area of operations between the 3rd Division, the 5th Division, and the 6th Division, but we will solve that problem by putting an army battalion to protect that region.

Before two days we did a raid in operation in Arab Zaid and we arrested a number of suspected killers, looters, and kidnappers. That investigation is still ongoing.

Yesterday after calls from the Al-Koba region we conducted a raid on terrorists killing four that faced us, arresting 17, and seized their weapons.

Today the Tiger Battalion in Al-Mugdadiyah, after an IED explosion, searched the area and arrested 11 persons from Al-Anbar with weapons and explosives, and we arrested the people that received them in their homes.

The army has emergency plans to protect all the regions which exist under our responsibility. I call on the media that back the security condition to help the police and army, and the Diyala people, to send the right message.

We send our condolences to the family of the martyred COL Abd al-Karem and his fellow soldiers doing their duty. He won by martyrdom and I follow him in the service of our country. God bless COL Abd al-Karem and congratulate him for his success. We wear the uniform to service our nation and we hope the terror attacks on civilians, the wicked and cowardly ways of the terrorist will end. The Iraqi Security Forces want the terrorists to face us. By the martyrdom of COL Abd al-Karem we give the gift of rose to perfume the land.

The nation will not be rent between Sunni, Shiite, Kurdish, Turkman, and Arab. We will execute the orders of the Defense Ministry and the central government. Diyala will not be a safe place for terrorists and if they call themselves Mojahiden, then they must wave a flag of principles, but they have no principles, only to kill civilians. But we are Al-Mojahiden against the terrorists and we will fight them until the final blood point.

Deputy Police Chief Najeb Juwad Amed:

By the name of God and pray for Mohammed, his family, and his fellows.

I denounce and condemn the terrorist, criminal acts on Askaryia Shrine in Samarra as an attempt to spread sectarian violence between the Iraqi people. We condemn the acts against the Mosques and innocent people. I ask Diyala people to be calm and patient and do not give service to Iraq's enemies that want to rent the nation apart. God willing we are one mind to realize the prosperity of Iraq.

The security condition in Diyala is good with the exception of a few individual incidences which are aimed at the tribes to exploit reprisal. The police forces are working with the Iraqi Army to end all incidents in the province.

Only two incidents have occurred in Diyala, the terror attack on the Zakhania Mosque, and the attack on the Abo-Aiub Al-Ansari Mosque where one was killed and two were wounded.

The police responsibility is to protect the citizens, to oppose terror, and avail the security and safety of the citizens, during curfew to transport citizens to the hospital, to patrol, and establish checkpoints, to work night and day to execute the role of protecting human rights. We will arrest any person that does not respect human rights, investigate him, and if guilty apply to him the law.

During this time we will protect the peaceful demonstrators who gather in response to the Samarra incident. We call on all the citizens to be calm and patient, and we call on God to keep and stabilize the new government and protect this great nation.

Sheik Shihab al-Badri, Al-Wakof Al-Sunni representative:

The big calamity and conspiracy aimed at the Askaryia Shrine was to spread violence and break the Iraqi will. We condemn and denounce this criminal act designed to rent Moslems in Iraq. This was an attack against the prophet and his family and the Samarra people who love Ahal al-Beit.

The terror which followed, burning the Mosques and Qura'an books, and killing the religious men has not happened in a long time. I call on love and toleration, and I prohibit the violation of religious men, and Mosques because this comes from ignorance and these leads to corrupting the people and the country.

We call on the government to protect the citizens, and mosques and chase away the assailants. We thank the police for protecting the people during Friday's services.

The Imam Askary is grandfather to Al-Sowamra, and we say to all that the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib is grand father to Imam Juafir Al-Zaki. Imam Askaryian existed in Samarra for 1000 years. The violation of the shrine by the terrorists is an attempt to rent the unity of Iraq.

Sheik Talib al-Otbi, Al-Wakof Al-Shiite representative:

By the name of God and pray for Mohammed, his family, and his fellows.

My condolences to the Iraqi people and all sects for this time and to Imam al-Mahdi for the attack on his father and grand father's shrine. And like this sad day to commemorate Imam Hussein martyred, peace be upon him, the Iraqi people denounce loudly the terror attack on the Askaryian Shrine. This dome was the biggest dome in the Islamic World.

Islam is not just a word we say, or rites to perform, it is a way of life, in work and theory. I call upon those who assailed on the Askaryian Shrine that the Imam is not in grave or dome. The Prophet and God lives in the believer's heart, and anything done against them will only increase the love in the believer's heart and God's light and blessing will spread it throughout the world.

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These acts are against God only, as are the actions that preceded the attack. The Mosque belongs not to Shiite or Sunni, but to God. Mohammed Nasser from Shiite scientists in Lebanon said the violation of the mosque is a violation on the Askaryia Shrine. The people of Diyala did their best at fighting the unjust and the dictator.

My dear people I warn all from the mindlessness and I call on all religious men and tribes to avoid violence and plant the good word between all people and we talk with one message, between all sects and spread brotherhood.

I direct the people to follow the right path and prohibit the fighting and the killing inside the Mosque and sabotaging it. The Mosque was once a refuge, but now people are afraid to pray in the Mosque, and this results in the renting of Iraqi people.

We need to spread respect for country, province, and human beings at the basic levels of education to solve our problems.

It is clear that not all Sunni or Shiite have a role in this problem, but security has a role to play, more than we may imagine. Special sects and sides are responsible. the Moslem is innocent from what happened. These secret hands must be discovered and discovered by the hand of power.

It is power that will stop the terrorists and the ignorants as it has the security and intelligence forces to do it. We want from the governor, and his vice, army and police leaders that endure this responsibility. Because they have chosen to lead this province, it is they that must put this all in front of their eyes. It is they that must endure the burdens of protecting the Mosques.

We are here to prevent blood shed between Sunni and Shiite, and we extend to the people to be calm. Good news is coming but you must remain patient. God willing we will delete the unjust and stay in the right as we ask our God to spread safety and stability on the Iraqi people.